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Students spend Christmas in China

By Erica Harms
Correspondent

Unwrapping Christmas presents and eating traditional holiday favorites was not how 128 college students nationwide spent their Christmas day. Instead, the group — 58 of whom went through Mississippi Baptist Student Unions — woke up on Dec. 25 in China.

Christmas in China, a national project sponsored by the International Mission Board (IMB) of the Southern Baptist Convention, has been a statewide project in Mississippi for three years. This year, Mississippi students spent Dec. 17-31 on nine different project sites in nine different cities throughout China.

"We were very happy to see such a large group of students from Mississippi in the Christmas in China project this year — almost 50% (of those participating nationwide)," said Mike Lopez, IMB director of student mobilization.

"Five years ago, I participated in my first Christmas in China with Southern Miss students," said Lloyd Lunceford, Baptist Student Union (BSU) director at the University of Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg. "Ever since that experience, I have seen it as my mission to help our folks in China make the most of this strategy."

Mississippi sent 35 students during Christmas 2004. Last year, the state project was on track when Hurricane Katrina forced the cancellation of the trip.

"The whole strategy about Christmas in China is to take advantage of the opportunity to share with the Chinese people the meaning of Christmas. What a great opportunity to unashamedly let people know that Christmas is all about Jesus, God's greatest gift to mankind. I believe this is the way the holiday is intended to be celebrated," Lunceford said.

Carlena Speed, a student at Baptist-affiliated William Carey University in Hattiesburg, said that while she understands how many people find it absurd to spend Christmas in a foreign country, she can't imagine herself staying at home. This was her second Christmas in China.

"For me, being away from home this time of year to share Jesus with people who have never heard is what makes Christmas a true Christmas," she said.

It's that same passion for reaching the lost that ignited a desire in Lunceford to lead this statewide team. "I believe in the strategy of taking students to the edge of lostness and telling people who have never had the chance to hear the Gospel. What a great opportunity for students," he said.

Nicole Wheat, a sophomore at Mississippi University for Women in



FAR AWAY FROM HOME — Nicole Wheat (third from left), a sophomore at Mississippi University for Women in Columbus, talks with Chinese students during the Christmas in China trip coordinated by the Collegiate Ministry Department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board and the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention. Fully half of the nationwide total of college students who made the trip hailed from Mississippi. (Special photo)

Columbus, was another student who considered it an "opportunity" to spend her Christmas break overseas.

"I have always had an interest in other countries, but all I really knew about China was that it was overpopulated. I had never left the country, or really my little corner of the United States," she said laughingly.

"I don't like Chinese food. Planes make me sick. I don't speak Chinese, and I hate being cold. Needless to say, nothing about this trip resembled my comfort zone," Wheat said.

"When I first considered the trip, I knew that my parents would probably not be thrilled about me flying internationally, let alone missing Christmas when I'm not home much the rest of the year. I knew that if I was going to do something like this, it would take God coming down with a flashing neon sign saying 'Go.' I underestimated God!" Wheat said.

Her call to go to China came last September during the State College Student Conference at Crossgates Church in Brandon, sponsored by the Collegiate Ministry Department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB) and funded by the Mississippi Cooperative Program, when one of the speakers read Romans 10:14-15.

"All summer long, I worked at Camp Garaywa (Mississippi Baptists' Girls in Action campground in Clinton), and this verse was written in our Bible studies. I

had to live out the very thing that I had taught to my campers for eight weeks — that life is not for us to live; it's for God to use us as instruments to do His work, no matter what the sacrifice that calls for," Wheat said.

"Our 58 participants this year represented almost half of all participants nationwide. Mississippi college students are really standing out for their willingness to serve and give," said Weaver McCracken, MBCB director of collegiate ministry. "The leadership of Lloyd Lunceford and our local directors in recruiting and promoting the project has been an important part of the project's success."

The total cost per participant was approximately \$2,800. According to McCracken, a significant portion of the project cost was provided by Mississippi Cooperative Program funding through the Acts 1:8 initiative, the MBCB Missions Mobilization Department, and BSU state missions.

For more information on collegiate ministry and BSU programs in Mississippi, contact McCracken at P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Telephone: (601) 292-3302 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651, ext. 302. E-mail: wmccracken@mcb.org. Web site: www.mcb.org.

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Another year, another sad anniversary

On January 21 an anniversary will be observed, but not a typical anniversary with which we associate joy and optimism. Quite the contrary. This sad anniversary will mark the 34th year since the U.S. Supreme Court handed down its devastating decision in *Roe v. Wade*, which legalized abortion on demand in this country throughout the entire nine months of pregnancy.

The vote among the justices wasn't even close at 7-2, with only Byron White and future Chief Justice William Rehnquist voting against legalizing abortion.

"I find nothing in the language or history of the Constitution to support the Court's judgment," wrote White in his dissenting opinion. "The Court simply fashions and announces a new constitutional right for pregnant mothers and, with scarcely any reason or authority for its action, invests that right with sufficient substance to override most existing state abortion statutes.

"The upshot is that the people and the legislatures of the 50 States are constitutionally disentitled to weigh the relative importance of the continued existence and development of the fetus, on the one hand, against a spectrum of possible impacts on the mother, on the other hand.

"As an exercise of raw judicial power, the Court perhaps has authority to do what it does today; but, in my view, its judgment is an improvident and extravagant exercise of the power of judicial review that the Constitution extends to this Court."

Rehnquist was equally vocal about the flaws in the Court's ruling. "To reach its result, the Court necessarily has had to find within the scope of the Fourteenth Amendment a right that was apparently



Special OFFERING

completely unknown to the drafters of the Amendment," he wrote.

Even the anonymous Jane Roe, for whom the *Roe v. Wade* case was styled, has renounced her role in the whole sordid affair so profoundly that she has allowed herself to be identified. Norma McCorvey, who has become a Christian, wants nothing more to do with this legal and moral travesty.

"It was my pseudonym, Jane Roe, which had been used to create the 'right' to abor-

tion out of legal thin air. But Sarah Weddington and Linda Coffey (her *Roe v. Wade* attorneys) never told me that what I was signing would allow women to come up to me 15, 20 years later and say, "Thank you for allowing me to have my five or six abortions. Without you, it wouldn't have been possible."

"Sarah never mentioned women using abortions as a form of birth control. We talked about truly desperate and needy women, not women already wearing maternity clothes," McCorvey said.

Despite all the legal trickery and intellectual dishonesty that surrounds the abortion issue, it is still legal in America to "terminate" a "product of conception" up until the moment of birth — and thereafter, if sworn testimonies of infanticide and organ removal in abortion clinics are to be believed.

The statistics are staggering. More than 50 million babies have gone to their deaths in the past 34 years. According to the Southern Baptist Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, 19% of all abortions are performed on teenagers and two-thirds are performed on never-married women. A total of 43% of women undergoing abortions identify themselves as Protestant, a category into which Baptists fall.

The social costs of abortion are high, too, and growing every year. With one-sixth of the prospective population exterminated so far, who will man the ramparts in future defense of this country? That's also one-sixth of the workforce and taxpayers gone. Who will labor to finance our economy and even our government, which is already hundreds of billions of dollars in the red each year? What will ultimately be the male-female ratio, which will have many serious social implications for generations to come?

All that aside, however, abortion just plain wrong (Psalm 106:37-43; Psalm 127:4-5). God cannot be pleased and, like the Israelites, we will undoubtedly pay a heavy price for our rebellion. Thus it has been, and thus it shall be until Jesus returns.

Why do we think we're any different?

can help you get your daily quota, and you'll also save a dollar or two per meal.

• **Get enough sleep.** Without a good night's sleep, you're likely to be tired, irritable, and have difficulty concentrating. Recent studies suggest that getting enough sleep actually helps you control your weight. Since I go to work very early in the morning, I just won't let interruptions keep me from getting to bed at a decent hour.

In today's hectic world, it's hard to make the time to do healthy things for ourselves. By making small changes, one at a time, you'll find you gain the energy necessary to do the rest. Make time for good health.

Quintana is director of the employee wellness program for GuideStone Financial Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention, and a graduate of All Saints Episcopal Hospital School of Vocational Nursing. Her commentary appears courtesy of Baptist Press.

GUEST OPINION:

Choose health

By Tamara Quintana
GuideStone Financial Resources
Dallas

• **Control your portions.** You can make an impact on your weight just by eating smaller portions. Start by dividing your regular meals in half. If you get hungry before your next meal, have a snack but listen to your body. I usually find that I'm comfortably satisfied with half.

• **Choose fresh.** Stock your fridge with fresh fruits and vegetables that are cut up and ready to eat. When you feel hungry, you'll be much more likely to make a good choice if healthy foods are convenient.

• **Clean out your kitchen.** Get rid of the potato chips, cookies, ice cream, or whatever tempts you. I sometimes splurge a little when I go out, but by getting high calorie foods out of my house I'm less likely to overindulge on a regular basis.

• **Drink more water.** Staying hydrated during the day will keep you feeling more alert and less hungry. I usually start my day by drinking a big glass of water. I keep a bottle of water at my desk throughout the day. Ordering water in restaurants

If your New Year's resolution is to get healthier, you're not alone.

Every year, millions of Americans resolve to make changes to improve their health. Unfortunately, most of us forget our resolutions practically before the Christmas decorations come down.

Instead of vowing completely to overhaul your life in January, why not start small? Make a list of the things you really want to achieve and set a goal to accomplish one each month throughout the year. Here are some simple ways you can improve your health this year:

• **Get moving.** If you spent most of '06 lying on the sofa in front of the TV, it's not realistic to think you'll run a marathon in '07 — but you can get more exercise. Determine to spend your TV time walking on a treadmill or exercising or better yet, give up 30 minutes of TV three or four times a week to get out and walk.

House OKs embryo-destroying research

WASHINGTON (BP) — The U.S. House of Representatives on Jan. 11 again approved federal funds for stem cell research that destroys embryos but still fell far short of the two-thirds majority needed to override a presidential veto.

The 253-174 vote for the Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act Jan. 11 marked a gain of 15 votes from the last time the House passed the bill with a 238-194 roll call in May 2005. The latest vote was a gain of 18 for supporters from July 2006, when the House voted 235-193 in an unsuccessful effort to override President Bush's only veto so far.

A veto override would require 290 votes to succeed if all House members vote. Before the latest House vote, the White House reiterated Bush's intention to veto the bill again. The White House released Jan. 10 a 64-page paper making the case for promoting research that does not destroy embryos. The president also may issue an executive order on behalf of non-destructive stem cell research, the Wall Street Journal reported.

The House roll call means opponents of embryonic stem cell research again will prevail in protecting Bush's policy that bars grants for experiments that destroy embryos. The Senate is expected to approve the House-passed bill easily, perhaps with a veto-proof majority. Only a totally unexpected abandonment by many foes of embryonic stem cell research funds would enable the House to achieve an override, however.

The House-approved measure would provide funds for

research using stem cells extracted from embryos stored at in vitro fertilization clinics. Bush's rule allows funds for research only on embryonic stem cell lines already in existence when his policy was announced in August 2001.

The House debated the bill, H.R. 3, for three hours before it voted.

Rep. John Linder, R-Ga., spoke against the proposal, saying, "If these researchers were taking this embryonic tissue from the just-laid eggs of loggerhead turtles or bald eagles, they would be fined and jailed. Surely we can do as much for humans."

Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, D-Md., said in supporting the bill, "It cannot be stressed enough that this legislation only authorizes federal research funds for stem cell lines generated from embryos that would otherwise be discarded by fertility clinics... I believe we have a moral obligation to provide our scientific community with the tools it needs to save lives, and this legislation, in my view, accomplishes exactly that."

Many embryonic stem cell research foes, however, support adoption of stored embryos by infertile couples to give them an opportunity to be born.

Rep. Virginia Foxx, R-N.C., refuted supporters of the bill who argued on the floor that opponents were "stopping the advance of science," as she put it.

"That is one of the most cynical things that I have ever heard said on this floor," she said. "... My husband is diabetic

ic. I am very empathetic to the fact that research could do a lot to help us with diseases, but this is not the route to go... Pro-lifers support stem cell research. We just don't support the destruction of life to get there."

The increased margin for the legislation was expected after several embryonic stem cell research opponents lost in the November election and Democrats gained a House majority for the first time in 12 years. Voting for the latest bill were 216 Democrats and 37 Republicans. Sixteen Democrats joined 158 GOP members in voting against the measure.

Stem cells are the body's master cells that can develop into tissues and other cells, providing hope for the treatment of numerous afflictions.

The Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission and other pro-life organizations oppose embryonic research because extracting stem cells requires the destruction of the days-old human being.

Unlike research using embryos, extracting stem cells from non-embryonic sources — such as umbilical cord blood, placenta, fat, and bone marrow — has nearly universal support. Such research, which is funded by the federal government, does not harm the donor and has produced treatments for at least 72 ailments, according to Do No Harm, a coalition promoting ethics in research. These include spinal cord injuries, rheumatoid arthritis, lupus, multiple sclerosis and sickle cell anemia.

"Let's be clear from the outset about what is working and what is not," Joseph Pitts, R-Pa., who opposed the bill, said during debate. "Embryonic stem cell research... has yet to produce a single cure or treatment in humans. Not one."

Tax dollars, he said, "should be directed toward methods that are proven to work" and research that is ethical.

Wendy Wright, Concerned Women for America's president,

said in a statement after the vote, "Allowing unethical research that kills small human beings is apparently not enough for some. They insist that all Americans must be complicit by paying for it, even though superior alternatives — which are ethical and effective — not only exist but are already treating patients."

Privately funded research on embryonic stem cells is legal and ongoing in the United States.

Before the House passed the bill, Republicans sought to amend it with a motion to prevent federal money from going to stem cell scientists who conduct therapeutic, or research, cloning. The motion failed, however, 238-189.

The House vote came only four days after the announcement of promising stem cell experiments that do not harm embryos. A team of researchers from Wake Forest University School of Medicine and Children's Hospital in Boston found the stem cells in the amniotic fluid of pregnant women.

The study showed the cells from the fluid that surrounds an unborn child have the ability to develop into a variety of tissues, a trait of embryonic stem cells, but do not have the tendency to form tumors, a propensity that has plagued research on cells from embryos.

Many scientists contend embryonic stem cells have more therapeutic potential than their non-embryonic counterparts, but embryonic research has yet to treat any diseases in human beings and has been plagued by the development of tumors in lab animals.

In addition, the strength of the pro-embryonic lobby's claims is not evident in the priorities of the multi-billion-dollar biotechnology industry, which has invested many times more in non-embryonic stem cell research.

"Private investors look for hope, too — they hope to make money," Linder said. "... Do you wonder why private investment is not flowing into embryonic stem cell research?"

H.R. 3 vote tallied

WASHINGTON (BP) — The U.S. House of Representatives on Jan. 11 again approved federal funds for stem cell research that destroys embryos but still fell far short of the two-thirds majority needed to override a presidential veto.

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Mississippi Congressman voting:

For using federal funds for stem cell research that destroys embryos

Bennie Thompson (2nd District), 2432 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. Telephone: (202) 225-5876. E-mail: <http://benniethompson.house.gov>

Against federal funds for stem cell research that destroys embryos

Roger Wicker (1st District), 2350 Rayburn House Building, Washington, DC 20515. Telephone: (202) 225-4306. No e-mail information available on web site.

Chip Pickering (3rd District), 229 Cannon HOB, Washington, DC 20515. Telephone: (202) 225-5031. E-mail: www.house.gov/pickering

Gene Taylor (4th District), 2269 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, DC 20515-2405. Telephone: (202) 225-5772. E-mail: www.house.gov/genetaylor

Looking back

10 years ago

Mississippi Baptist Medical Center in Jackson breaks ground for a 133,000-square-foot medical office complex to be constructed just north of the main medical center complex on property currently being used as the employee parking lot.

20 years ago

When Monticello businessman James Boone decides to go out of business, he gives his shoe store to Monticello Church. Pastor James Fancher in turn calls the Mississippi Baptist Children's Village, which carts off \$32,546.64 in boots, shoes, and assorted clothing.

60 years ago

"Revolutionary" is not the word for the recently discovered Dead Sea Scrolls, writes Morris Ashcroft in the Review and Expositor, the theological quarterly published by Southern Seminary.



MISSISSIPPI
BAPTISTS

THE SECOND FRONT PAGE

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TOP TEN LIST



YOU CAN RESPOND RIGHT NOW!

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)

2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)

3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)

4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Jesus Christ today, contact a local Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

Americans love lists. I do not know who comes up with all of these lists but we just seem to thrive on them. You know there is the best-dressed list, the worst dressed list, the best players in professional sports list, and the worst golfers in America list. We just can't wait to see who is on the list and give our opinion about it.

Last spring I was in Marshall County for their associational meeting, and they had a special presentation for an evangelistic outreach effort they were going to have. They were asking everybody to be praying for those special meetings that involved all of the churches in the association. The associational mission director, Jim Burke, challenged everyone to make a **Top Ten Most Wanted List**. What a great idea! Everybody was suppose to make their own list of people they knew who did not know Jesus as Savior, to be praying for them, and encouraging them to come to the evangelistic meeting. I am confident there are some folks who might even think that you should have a list with a lot more than 10. Maybe so, but for many people who actually made a list, prayed, and encouraged the folks, the ten was ten more than the list they had in the beginning.

What a great idea it would be for all of us to make a **Top Ten Most Wanted List** and pray daily and fervently that God would touch their hearts and souls and be saved. You certainly can make your own list to pray for without my help, but just for the sake of broadening our vision let me list ten areas for you to draw from to get your top ten list.

1. **The Family** — By all means pray for your own family. What a tremendous ministry it is when believers hold up

- Jim Futral, executive director of the Mississippi Baptist Convention in Jackson.

- Daniel W. Jones, vice chancellor for health affairs, dean of the School of Medicine, and professor of medicine at the University of Mississippi Medical Center in Jackson.

- Tatsiana Kozhych, a neonatology specialist Minsk, Belarusia, and member of the Belarusian Christian Medical Society.

- Natallia Salonskaya, chief of ophthalmology at Ecomedservis in Brest, Belarusia and member of the Belarusian Christian Medical Society.

- Donald and Sarah Duvall, physicians who worked for 33 years at Kendiri Baptist Hospital in Indonesia.

- Nancy Kirk Jones, who began serving in 1968 as an International Mission Board (IMB) missionary nurse in Kenya where she started mobile and permanent medical clinics.

- Jane F. Paysinger, a pharmacist who have served with IMB in west Africa since 1991. She is currently posted to Baptist Medical Centre in Nalerigu, Ghana.



Directions

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

their family members before the throne of grace. Surely you want each one of them to come to know the Lord, and I can tell you it is one of the great joys in life to see the Lord work in your family, for children to come to know Jesus, and for grandchildren to be saved. Maybe it is your parents, grandparents, or an uncle or aunt that you talk to God about and watch as He works in their lives.

2. **A Friend** — Probably all of us know someone we consider a friend who does not know Jesus, the friend of sinners. Pray for that friend. Through your prayers keep God's attention focused on your friend as you seek to share the Gospel with the friend and put their attention on the Lord. One of the sad things that often happens when people come to know Jesus is that they enjoy being with God's people and are thrilled to be in a new fellowship of love and acceptance to the point that they forget about those friends who are still lost and in desperate need of the Savior.

3. **The Frozen** — While primarily this is an evangelistic list and you are praying for people who do not know Christ, there may be some who have confessed Christ but they have just grown cold and frozen toward the things of God. Possibly they have just gotten out of the fellowship or they have just allowed Satan to take away their joy, their warmth, and their passion for the things of God. Pray for the frozen.

4. **A Foe** — Do you know someone who just does not like you? Possibly you do not care for this person. They may have done something, said something, or maybe at every opportunity they say or do something. Often one of the most difficult things to do and one of the most difficult persons to pray for is the person who does not look like you or you do not like. A word of wisdom from many years ago says, "If you make a friend out of your enemy, he is no longer your enemy." Well, begin to pray for someone who does not particularly like you or does things to hurt you and take them before the Father's throne. Lovingly and caringly pray for God's will to be done, for Him to touch their heart, and you will be amazed at what it does for you.

5. **A Foreigner** — I am aware that the word foreigner is not politically correct these days, but include someone from a different country who is here to study, or teach, or even someone who is here illegally. Whoever they are and from wherever they have come, they still need the Lord Jesus, and we can participate in the harvest by praying for them.

6. **A Failure** — Do you know of someone who has recently been involved in a failing experience? It may be a business; it could be circumstances beyond their control, or a divorce that has been particularly painful. Someone has failed. In truth, all of us have experienced failures.

We also know that failure is not fun to try to get over. So why don't you take the time, love, and energy and invest God's love in one person.

7. **The Frustrated** — There are people all around us who live in frustration. Many of them are frustrated with life itself. Some are frustrated with work. Some are frustrated because others are frustrated. Pray for God's help and depend on Him to intervene.

8. **The Famous** — Do you happen to know someone who is well known? It does not have to be the president or some movie star. Some people grow into a sense of their own importance to the point that they do not feel that God or anyone else is big enough to suit them and fit the need of their life. Sometimes famous people walk around with an air or sense of importance that comes across as arrogance that they are bigger than life. The truth is they need to carve out time each day to spend in a loving relationship with Jesus.

9. **A Fake** — From time to time we all run into people who are not what they want people to believe they are. They truly need the love of God unleashed in John 3:16.

10. **The Framed** — Last but certainly not least add someone to your list that has been done wrong, taken advantage of, and maybe we participated in it. They ended up just being framed, set back in life, experienced a job loss, and certainly lost some self-esteem. What a ministry can be performed in our churches.

Well, you make your own top ten list of folks you want to pray for who need a fresh touch from the powerful and loving Lord Jesus. Now let's go get them!

The author may be contacted at P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. E-mail: jfutral@mbcb.org.

Baptist Medical/Dental F'ship to meet this week in Jackson

JACKSON, MS (Special) — The Baptist Medical Dental Fellowship (BMDF) will hold its annual national meeting at First Church, Jackson, on January 18-21, according to Jackson dentist Bill Boteler, program chairman for the meeting and president-elect of the organization.

The theme of the meeting is, Teaching Them to Observe, from Matthew 28:19-20.

"BMDF national meetings are one of the centerpieces of the ministry to which God has called us. Gathering each year allows us to revel in God's call for BMDF. We celebrate the work of spreading the Gospel and acting it out through healthcare missions among the world's neediest people," said physician Fred Loper, BMDF executive director and a former medical missionary. "Pray fervently for God to mightily use this meeting to advance His Kingdom."

Among the speakers scheduled for the meeting are:

- Southern Baptist Convention President Frank Page, pastor of First Church in Taylors, S.C.

- Denton Lotz, general secretary of the Baptist World Alliance in New York City.



• A number of Christian medical workers whose names and fields of service cannot be disclosed for security reasons.

The meeting begins with registration from 1-6 p.m. on January 18, with the evening session beginning at 6:30 p.m. Sessions on January 19 begin at 8 a.m., 1:30 p.m., and 7 p.m. The January session begins at 8 a.m., followed by breakout sessions at 2:30 p.m.

The general sessions are open to the public. For a complete agenda with times and speakers, visit www.bmdf.org.

The Baptist Nursing Fellowship (BNF) will meet simultaneously with BMDF. Wanda Lee, a nurse and executive director of the Woman's Missionary Union auxiliary of the Southern Baptist Convention, will lead Bible study. Session topics include domestic violence, diabetes update, missionary conferences, and volunteer missions information. A student track is also available.

Information on the nursing fellowship meeting can also be obtained at www.bmdf.org.

A missionary fair will also be held in conjunction with the BMDF/BNF meeting. Ministries and missionaries associated with BMDF partner organizations will be exhibiting and discussing opportunities and services for BMDF members in carrying out missions opportunities.

Based in Oklahoma City, BMDF defines its mission as, "Enhancing and changing lives through fellowship and healthcare missions throughout the world." For more information, write to 4209 Royal Avenue, Oklahoma City, OK 73108, or visit www.bmdf.org.

LifeWay Ridgecrest celebrating century of SBC service

ASHEVILLE, N.C. (BP) — Nestled in the Blue Ridge Mountains near Asheville, N.C., is a place many people are surprised to learn is not only one of the largest religious conference centers in the nation, but also is celebrating a century of ministry this year.

From humble beginnings in a single log cabin, LifeWay Ridgecrest Conference Center has grown into a 1,300-acre campus with 90,000 square feet of conference space and housing accommodations for more than 2,000 people.

For generations, this grand retreat in the mountains has provided a place where people can escape from the noise and interruptions of everyday life to enjoy fellowship and experience spiritual renewal.

"Ridgecrest has been a center not only for inspiration and blessing to people that live in Western North Carolina, but to hundreds of thousands of people throughout the country," wrote Billy Graham in a letter commemorating the 100th anniversary. Graham was a frequent speaker at Ridgecrest, especially in the early years of his ministry.

More than three million people have visited Ridgecrest, and that number continues to grow. Some have met their spouses there, while others have developed friendships that have lasted decades.

"There are many thousands of pastors, missionaries and church staff members who can point to a moment at Ridgecrest when they committed their lives to Christ or to vocational ministry," said Byron Hill, national director for LifeWay Conference Centers. "Marriages and entire families have been strengthened or transformed, and numerous laypersons have received training to better equip them for ministry."

While Ridgecrest began as a retreat for Southern Baptists, in recent years the conference center has drawn visitors from Christian leaders and a variety of Christian denominations throughout the nation.

"When Christian leaders are in our area, it's not just good for the economy but for spiritual impact as



ADVENTURE AT RIDGECREST — Taking advantage of the beauty of the region surrounding LifeWay Ridgecrest Conference Center in North Carolina, participants in a Singles Adventure Weekend raft on the French Broad River near Asheville. (BP photo)

well," noted James Walker, senior pastor of Biltmore Baptist Church in Asheville.

Asheville Mayor Charles Worley, "There is a strong recognition that the Asheville area is a spiritual center, and Ridgecrest has been a big part of that."

A new hotel opening, a centennial luncheon and a staff alumni reunion are among the events that will be held to commemorate the anniversary, which kicks off this month. In the coming months LifeWay will release a series of news releases based on real-life stories from individuals who had meaningful experiences at Ridgecrest.

Last summer, B&H Publishing Group released "Ridgecrest: A Century of Spiritual Renewal," a 96-page, full-color coffee table book that takes readers on a nostalgic journey through time and examines how generations of Southern Baptists and others have had their lives changed in dramatic ways at Ridgecrest.

Chapters include testimonials from well-known Christian leaders such as Billy Graham and the late Adrian Rogers; a look at the volunteers and donors who make Ridgecrest's work possible; and a section that focuses on camps and programs for young people. Other chapters relive highlights of the past century, examine how Ridgecrest has changed and look at what's in store for the center's next 100 years.

Interspersed throughout the book are stories submitted by people of all ages whose lives have been influenced by their time at Ridgecrest.

In recent years, Ridgecrest has undergone a revitalization plan that includes renovations and construction of new facilities for lodging, conference meetings and worship space.

"While we continue to undergo extensive revitalization efforts to ensure Ridgecrest remains an attractive and relevant spiritual haven, the real story of Ridgecrest has always been — and always will be — about people," Hill said.

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JUST FOR THE RECORD



1. RA Color Guard, First Church, Corinth



2. Congregation of Iglesia Maravilloso Salvador



3. Deacon Ordination, Hillsboro Church, Forest

1. The RAs of First Church, Corinth, participated in the Tri-State Camp-O-Ree and RA night with the Grizzlies at the FedEx Forum in Memphis Nov. 24. Shown is the RA color guard for the church, presenting the colors at the event. Approximately 294 boys attended during a busy Thanksgiving holiday weekend. (Photo by Joe Murphy/NBAE/Getty Images).

2. First Church, Cleveland, and Calvary Chapel, Parchman, have partnered for five years in Hispanic ministry in Cleveland. Cleveland's Hispanic congregation, Iglesia Maravilloso Salvador, is shown here after its Dec. 17 service.

3. Hillsboro Church, Forest, ordained Ferrell Williamson as deacon Dec. 10. Shown are Williamson and pastor Ted Hawkins.

4. West Corinth Church, Corinth, ordained Tony Lowery and Phillip King as deacons Nov. 12. Shown are Lowery, pastor Harold G. King, and King.

5. The children of First Church, Potts Camp, had a Christmas party Dec. 6. The children enjoyed fun and games, and provided presents for "Ebony" and her grandmother, a family who lost their home to Katrina. Shown are the children.

6. First Church, Newton, is hosting This Hope in concert Jan. 20, 7 p.m. A love offering will be received; doors open at 6:15 p.m.

7. Cedar View Church, Olive Branch, is hosting a community singing with the Almost Famous Carl Crain Singers Jan. 20, 6 p.m.

8. Franklin Creek Church, Moss Point, promoted its Lottie Moon Christmas Offering by decorating Sunday School room doors, making place mats for the international meal, and purchasing ornaments for the church tree. The church's goal was \$2006 and it received \$2198.92.

9. The Bivocational Ministers and Wives supper will be held during the state evangelism conference at Pine-lake Church, Brandon, Jan. 22. Also, the Mississippi Council on Bivocational Ministries will meet at the Eagle Ridge Conference Center, Raymond, Apr. 9, noon-4 p.m.

10. First Church, Ackerman, will host the Talley Trio and the Joyful Noise Quartet Jan. 28, 6:30 p.m. A love offering will be taken.



4. Deacon Ordinations, West Corinth Church, Corinth



5. Children's Christmas Party, First Church, Potts Camp

STAFF CHANGES



1. Holland Family, Mt. Pisgah Church, Sandhill

1. Mt. Pisgah Church, Sandhill, has called Jason Holland as pastor. Holland comes from Shady Grove Church, Lucedale, and is shown with his wife Jennifer and daughters Courtney and Kailey.

2. Popps Ferry Church, Biloxi, has called Larry W. Yarber as pastor. He is a graduate of William Carey College, and was ordained to the ministry in 1998 at Antioch Church, Prentiss. He served churches in Prentiss, Charleston, and Meadville before coming to Biloxi.

HOOMEOMINGS AND REVIVALS

Wheeler Grove Church, Corinth: Bailey Smith Real Evangelism Conference, Jan. 24-26; Wed., 6:30 p.m.; Thurs., 10 a.m. and 6:30 p.m.; Fri., 10 a.m., 1:30 and 6:30 p.m.; Sam Cathey, Bailey Smith, Junior Hill, Bob Pitman, Bill Saye, Phil Hoskins, Steve Gaines, Bill Stafford Mike Speck Trio, Greater Vision, Booth Brothers, and the Pfeifers, speakers and music; choirs nightly; meals provided after the morning services and Thurs. Fri. before the evening services. Thursday afternoon, preachers will be called from the floor. There will be a special women's conference from 1-4:30 p.m. Thursday.

Calvary Church, Batesville: Revival, Feb. 4-9; Sun., 10:30 a.m. and 6 p.m.; weeknights, 6:30 p.m. Includes preaching, praise music, teen and children's programs; Life Action Ministries, music and speaking.

JUST FOR THE RECORD



11. Deacon Ordination, Bolton Church, Bolton



12. Deacon Ordination, New Hope Church, Sumrall

11. **Bolton Church, Bolton**, ordained Bill Fleming as deacon Nov. 12. Shown are Jackie Banes, Fleming, and Keely Fleming.

12. **New Hope Church, Sumrall**, recently ordained J.W. Warren and Raymond Smith as deacons. Shown are pastor Charles Broome, Warren, Linda Warren, Neida Smith, and Smith, with David Kinsey in the background.

13. **Belden Church, Belden**, is hosting a Beth Moore simulcast event Feb. 24, 10 a.m.-3:30 p.m. Cost is \$25; meal included. For an order form, call (662) 842-6341 or visit www.belden-baptistchurch.com.

14. **First Church, Jackson**, along with the Baptist Medical Dental Fellowship, is sponsoring a Medical Missions Conference Jan. 18-21, with registration at 1 p.m. Thursday. The conference is for anyone in the medical profession interested in using his or her gifts and abilities in medical missions. For registration and schedule, visit www.bmdf.org.

15. **Bayou View Church, Gulfport**, is hosting a conference on spiritual discipline Feb. 17, 8:30 a.m. The conference is free. Donald S.

Whitney, professor of Biblical Spirituality at Southern Seminary, speaker.

16. The WMU of Lakeside Church, Hattiesburg, put together five food boxes including a ham and a turkey for Thanksgiving for the needy, and nine food boxes for Christmas. The youth made 14 fruit boxes to deliver to the elderly and shut-ins.

17. The Mission Friends and Children on Mission from Old Oak Grove Church, Myrtle, took toys to the New Albany Gazette for Sharing at Christmas.

18. The singing Christmas tree choir of Trinity Church,

Vicksburg, presented Joy in this Place Dec. 9-10, with Graham Smith narrating. Shown is the tree, with pastor Doug Westmoreland on left and minister of music and students Doug Thompson on right.

19. A group from McAdams Church, McAdams, went Christmas caroling on Christmas Eve to some of the shut-ins of the community. Shown are the participants. James Young, pastor.

20. The youth and children of Skene Church, Skene, collected 166 Christmas shoeboxes. Shown are the participants. Wayne Sistrunk, pastor.



18. Singing Christmas Tree Choir, Trinity Church, Vicksburg

MS POSITIONS

THE METRO BAPTIST ASSOCIATION is seeking resumes for the position of Associational Missions Director. Metro Association comprises Hinds and Madison counties. MBA has 82 churches and over 70,000 members. Resumes may be sent to: Search Committee; 6530 Dogwood View Parkway; Jackson, MS 39213. Deadline for receiving resumes is March 1, 2007.

EAST PHILADELPHIA BAPTIST CHURCH in Philadelphia, Miss., is seeking a student/youth minister. Seminary degree preferred. If interested, please send resume to mccheatham@choctaw.org or call Mark Cheatham at (601) 650-9271. **ROSE HILL FBC, ROSE HILL, MISS.**, is seeking a bivocational worship leader/minister of music. Please send resumes to Rose Hill FBC P.O. Box 1 Rose Hill,

MS 39356, attn: Worship Leader search committee. You may email to: ebmartin@bayspringtel.net or view our website: www.rosehillfbc.org. Pastor: Bro. Eddie Martin.

AUBURN BAPTIST CHURCH TUPELO, Miss., is seeking a full-time Minister of Children/Education. All applicants please submit resume to Auburn Baptist Church 1138 Road 931 Tupelo, MS 38804.

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ASHLEY COUNTY BAPTIST ASSOCIATION of Crossett, Arkansas is accepting resumes for the position of Associational Missionary. This is a full time position that consists of serving 25 churches in Southeast Arkansas. Deadline for receiving resumes is March 1, 2007. Send Resumes to: Search Committee, Ashley Baptist Association, 1547 Hwy. 52W, Crossett, Arkansas, 71635 or email to acba9395@alltel.net.

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19. Christmas Carolers, McAdams Church, McAdams



20. Christmas Shoeboxes, Skene Church, Skene

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QDT JXUHU IXQBB RU
IYWDI YD JXU IKD, QDT
YD JXU CEED, QDT YD
JXU IIQHI; QDT KFED JXU
UQHJX TYIJHUII EV
DQJYEDI, MYJX FUHFBUN-
YJO; JXU IUQ QDT JXU
NQLUI HEQHYDW.
BKAU JMUDJO-EDU:
JMUDJO-VYLU

Clue: B = L

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Acts Nine: Five.

1. Beasleys perform at WCU's BSU Renovation Week

1. Husband and wife team Selena and Clark Beasley of Atlanta, Ga., performed during William Carey University's BSU Renovation Week. Clark is a 2001 WCU graduate with a degree in music. The Beasleys lead worship for student ministries at various churches in Atlanta. During this same event, Don Stewart, professor emeritus of New Testament at New Orleans Seminary, provided a luncheon presentation on 1 John. Stewart was chair of the religion department at WCU 1963-1978.

2. Ray and Betty Hannah were recently honored in a ceremony naming the Mississippi College Food Court in honor of the Hannahs. The Hannahs were recognized for their generous support and loyalty to Mississippi College. Ray Hannah is a 1958 graduate of MC and a native of Forest and Morton. The Hannahs reside in Fairburn, Ga. Shown, from left: Bill Sones, Chairman of the MC Board of Trustees; Lee Royce, President of MC; Ray and Betty Hannah; Danny Rutland, V.P. for Advancement-Alumni; Michael Ward, president of the Students Government Association.

3. New Orleans Seminary Dec. 16 graduates include Manuel Duarte from Biloxi, who received the master of Divinity. Duarte's home church is Bay Vista Church, Biloxi. He holds the associate of applied science in personnel management from Community College of the Air Force in Gulfport.

and a bachelor in business from Faulkner University in Montgomery, Ala.

Alfred Jernigan, III from Vicksburg, received the master of divinity. Jernigan's home church is Bowmar Church of Vicksburg. He holds the bachelor of arts in communication from The University of Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg.

Patricia Webb received the master of divinity with specialization in biblical languages. Webb's home church is Tate Church in Corinth. She holds the bachelor of science in home economics education from Murray State University in Murray, Ky.

Gary Dover from Hickory received the master of arts in Christian education. Dover's home church is Hickory Church, Hickory. He holds the bachelor of music in church music from Belmont University in Nashville, Tenn.

Linda Monroe from Brookhaven received the master of arts in Christian education. Monroe's home church is First Church in Brookhaven. She holds the bachelor of science in recreation and Bible from Mississippi College in Clinton.

Patricia Robey from Taylorsville received the master of arts in Christian education. Robey's home church is First Church, Taylorsville. She holds the bachelor of science in business administration from William Carey University in Hattiesburg.

Peggy Jo Campbell from Meridian received the certificate of music at Leavell College. Campbell holds the bachelor of science in educa-

2. Hannahs recognized, MC



3. NOTBS Doctorate Graduates

tion from Mississippi State University in Starkville, and a masters of science in community counseling from Mississippi State University in Meridian.

Kevin Thompson from Brookhaven received the bachelor of arts in Christian ministry at Leavell College. Thompson's home church is Friendship Church in Brookhaven.

Three students with Mississippi ties graduated with doctoral degrees from New Orleans Seminary on Dec. 16. Pictured from left to right are Lewis Harrell, of evangelism and discipleship at First Church in Pontotoc, who received the doctor of educational ministry degree; David Bishop of Echu received the doctor of ministry degree; Seminary President Chuck Kelley; and Marvin Gavin, pastor of Pine Grove Church in Ellisville, who received the doctor of ministry degree.

4. William Carey University will host the second annual Young Authors Celebration Feb. 23 from 9:30 a.m. until 1 p.m. on the Hattiesburg campus. Hank Bounds, state superintendent of education, will join the 415 students who have regis-

tered in grades one through eight from 15 schools in six districts. Events include attending a book signing by 11 Mississippi authors and illustrators, meeting a national author, touring the college campus, participating in a Book Fair, having lunch on campus, meeting WCU student teachers, and sharing their books with other students.

5. Hardy Church, Grenada, awarded the William R. Moss Memorial Ministerial Scholarship to Jack Daniel Napier, who lives in Blue Mountain and is a student at Blue Mountain College.

6. Gene Winters, professor of church music and voice at William Carey University, presented the university with two copies of the festschrift Minds and Hearts in Praise of God, Hymns and Essays in Church Music in honor of Hugh T. McElrath, which includes one of his original hymns. A festschrift, a German word meaning "celebration publication," is a book honoring a respected academic. Winters wrote the text and tune for the original hymn O God, in Your Word You Instruct Us to Sing, based on Psalm 33:1-8.

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NAMB seeks to redefine self after tumultuous year

First in a two-part series

ALPHARETTA, Ga. (BP and local reports) — If there is any question about where the focus of the North American Mission Board (NAMB) lies as it enters the New Year, those questions quickly dissipate after talking with key leadership.

"We want to be about evangelism and church planting and sending missionaries who do evangelism and church planting," says Interim Vice President for Missions Harry Lewis. That simple statement sums up the board's direction as it stands on the threshold of 2007 and looks toward its 10th anniversary this June.

After a roller coaster 2006 that saw the board's president and several high-ranking employees leave under a cloud of questions about expenditures and leadership, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) agency headquartered in Alpharetta, Ga., is trying to right itself.

"We spent several months in listening sessions with our state partners and we heard those three primary objectives as being the areas they would like us to focus on," Lewis said. "We are not reducing the other objectives we have had since our founding, we are just narrowing our focus."

Shortly after its launch in June 1997 the board announced six Major Ministry Objectives. It's those objectives that have been distilled down to three — sharing Christ, starting churches and mobilizing missionaries and volunteers — that set NAMB apart from all other Southern Baptist entities. The refined objectives were approved by trustees during their Oct. 4 board meeting.

The objectives that have been removed from the top-tier focus — volunteering in missions, impacting the culture and equipping leaders — have simply been folded into other strategies that, in turn, support the remaining three primary objectives.

"We are still committed to those objectives but we believe we can do those more effectively through existing programs," Lewis explained. "This change simply sharpens our focus and helps us to stay on our primary mission."

It's that focus that bolsters the work of 258 employees in the board's Atlanta-area headquarters. With a simpler mission statement, they say, they are more energized to work with churches, associations and state partners to complete the task of evangelizing North America with the Gospel.

The new NAMB is being structured from the ground up in response to those listening sessions with key leaders at all levels of SBC life. In addition to providing a unified, national strategy in evangelism and church planting, feedback from partners also included requests for better research and development and for help in reaching people groups.

NAMB plans to beef up those areas with an enhanced research and development strategy that will undergird all of its initiatives, with the board eventually moving toward a people group model and focusing on one group each year.

"We are increasingly looking at North America as a mission field of people groups, much like the International Mission Board (IMB) has approached its work around the world," Lewis said. "We want to focus on the world that God has brought to us."

"We are realizing that we have a North American assignment with an international impact. As we do a better job of reaching North America we will be building stronger churches. As those churches grow, God will provide the people and resources to strengthen the IMB's ventures around the world," Lewis explained.

Reducing the lostness in North America, in short, will provide the personnel and financial resources to reduce the lostness of the world. It's a big task, but one which NAMB is positioning itself to undertake with a renewed vision and vigor.

Evangelism

"Our team is not just in this building," says John Avant, NAMB's vice president for evangelism.

"We are part of a national team of state evangelism directors, executive directors, pastors, members of the Conference of Southern Baptist Evangelists, seminary professors and others who play a valuable role in helping us reach North America. We do not want to do anything in a vacuum; we want to chart our future together, as a team."

The feedback Avant has heard most clearly in the

listening sessions is the call for "authentic relationships; real, trusting relationships" and the need for "a cohesive national evangelism strategy for evangelizing North America; not a top-down effort but a grassroots effort."

NAMB is hoping to launch that renewed evangelistic vision at this year's SBC annual meeting in San Antonio, Avant said.

"We are charged by the Southern Baptist Convention to lead in a national strategy for evangelism and church planting. But we cannot possibly do that without the help of our partners," Avant said. "In San Antonio we hope to see a platform full of our leaders from all levels of the SBC, standing shoulder-to-shoulder as a unified team."

The board does not currently know what the long-term strategy will look like or where it will end, Avant said, "but we know where it begins —

with leaders on their knees asking God for renewal and for His power" as they make a commitment to evangelize the world together.

"What we need in San Antonio is for Southern Baptists to see this unity. After that comes the nuts and bolts of determining how we flesh it out," Avant said.

"The implementation for a true NAMB evangelism strategy is a 10-year journey," he said. "That doesn't mean that we do not make immediate progress, but it does mean that we are laying the groundwork for a serious attempt to bring North America to Christ."

This year will see an emphasis on the 150th anniversary of the 1857-58 prayer revival called the Fulton Street Revival that saw a million professions of faith. If that were to happen today it would equate to 10 million individuals turning to Christ, Avant said.

Part of that long-term strategy already is being implemented through a pilot program called "E-Coaching," an approach that Avant said "came out of my heart that we must be more about people than products. We will not abandon great products that our churches need for evangelism, but we do not believe that anything we send to churches in a box is going to result in the revolutionary evangelistic changes that we want."

E-Coaching is a mentoring and high-accountability partnership that will be rolled out to at least a dozen state conventions this year. Under this new strategy a group of pastors will be brought together for a two-day meeting where they explore new approaches to evangelism. Each pastor will attend sessions that are tailored to his unique ministry setting and will primarily be mentored from others across their state who serve in similar situations. Also, an occasional speaker from a national platform — someone from NAMB or a seminary with related expertise — will share the bigger picture with what is occurring throughout North America in similar settings.

"We will walk with them for a year, pouring ourselves into them with all the resources they need. We hope to see a significant increase in baptisms as they become more effective in reaching the lost in their communities," Avant said.

The Utah-Idaho Southern Baptist Convention piloted the approach in 2006. Former Georgia pastor Tim Clark, who serves as executive director for the convention, noted positive results from the experience.

"The E-Coaching approach gave our pastors the personal accountability and the encouragement they needed and raised their evangelism awareness. One of its strengths is that it's not a program — it's about relationships as modeled between the evangelism coach and the individual being mentored."

"The sharing of knowledge was also valuable. Out here we serve in such isolation that whenever something good happens we frequently don't have a way of knowing about it or even sharing it. From that perspective it offers a great support system for our pastors as they share what God is doing in their communities."

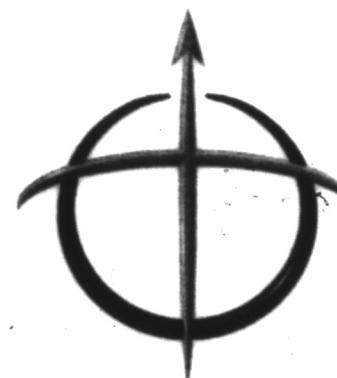
"It is not a one-size-fits-everyone approach, and I like that," Clark said. "When NAMB rolls it out, it will be tailored to the needs of every state partnership, and that's what will make it effective."

As NAMB gears up for the 10-year national evangelism strategy — of which E-Coaching is only one element — Avant emphasized the need for a strong dependence on divine assistance.

"One thing that we're hearing from our listening sessions is that we must see God move among us or this is a waste of time," he said. "At the launch in San Antonio we intend to call Southern Baptists to prayer and renewal. We believe God knows exactly what our strategy looks like and He must show us for the proper approach to have an eternal impact."

Church Planting

Richard Harris, NAMB's vice president for church planting, is encouraged from the listening sessions by the shared vision that many partners already have for planting more churches.



NORTH AMERICAN MISSION BOARD

"I think we live in one of the most opportunity-filled days in the history of church planting that we have ever seen," Harris said, noting, "Church planting is the greatest tool of evangelism if it's intentionally evangelistic."

Harris said he believes NAMB will be far more effective with three major ministry objectives rather than the six previously in place.

"That's who we are as a Southern Baptist [entity] — we were doing many good things with the six objectives but perhaps at the expense of our primary objectives of evangelism, church planting and missions," he explained.

One of the primary ways NAMB will make inroads in reducing lostness in North America will be through training church planters who baptize new believers, Harris said.

"Anything that is healthy reproduces itself. Our new direction is to ask our church planters to baptize three people in their first year, five in their second year, eight in their third year and 10 in their fourth year. That would add substantially to our baptism figures as a denomination," he said.

NAMB's goal is to work with its partners to start 7,500 new churches in the next four years, beginning this year, Harris said. That average of 1,875 plants a year, compounded by the 3-5-8-10 formula over four years, would result in an additional 99,000 baptisms in the fourth year — by 2010.

The SBC's previous high year for church plants was 2004 when 1,791 were started, followed by a slight dip to 1,725 in 2005. Final figures for 2006 are still being compiled and will not be released for a couple of months.

NAMB doesn't start churches in a vacuum. It works closely with state conventions and is heavily dependent on cooperation with state directors of missions or the state's church planting director. As one of those partners, the Georgia Baptist Convention working in concert with NAMB added a record 103 churches in 2005, breaking the former record of 72 set the previous year.

More than 15% of those new Georgia starts were language/culture congregations. The variety of the new work is shown in the 13 distinct groups which encompassed Vietnamese, Haitian, Laotian, Asian Indian, Filipino, Hispanic, Brazilian, Messianic, French African, Romanian, Korean second generation, Bosnian, and Ghanaian congregations. On the national level, 61 percent of the church plants reported to NAMB were ethnic or African American.

That's why the planting of new churches is so critical to reducing the lostness of North America, Harris maintained.

"If we and our partners can meet our church planting goals using the 3-5-8-10 formula, we could get one-fourth of our annual baptisms from church planters," he said.

THE VILLAGE VIEW



Dr. Rory Lee, Executive Director

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GIFTS OF HONOR AND MEMORY

A portion of The Village View is allocated each month to a list of Gifts of Honor and Memory. Many groups and individuals elect to pay tribute to others through this sensitive, meaningful, and helpful medium. This feature is hopefully designed to further honor with taste and respect those who are and have been special to our special friends.

DEC. 18-31, 2006

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FBC Witness Staff
Mrs. Helen P. Davis & Family
Grace SSC, Main St BC-Hattiesburg
Ms. Susan Taylor Tullis
Main Street BC Staff-Hattiesburg
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Mr. & Mrs. Barney Albritton
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BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

What Is Human Life Worth?

**Genesis 9: 5-6, Psalm 139: 13-16;
Proverbs 10: 11, 15-16, 18:24; 10:12**



Lofton

By Gloria Lofton

This week in our study of Creation Faith: Living By God's Design, we will try to answer the question: What Is Human Life Worth?

When God looked upon His creation and saw wickedness becoming increasingly worse, He was sorry He had made man; His heart was filled with pain. In His grief vowed to destroy every living thing on earth by sending a flood.

In all His creation, there was one man God found righteous. For his righteousness Noah and his family were chosen by God to be spared from the destruction of civilization. In obedience to God's command, Noah built an ark and took with him, his family

and representative pairs of all the animal kingdom of the earth. After the flood, God blessed Noah and his sons, but also gave guidelines to live by.

In Genesis 9: 5-6, God says, "And surely I will require your lifeblood; from every beast I will require it. And from every man, from every man's brother I will require the life of man. Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed, for in the image of God He made man." (NASB). God will

demand accountability for the killing of human life. No one's life and well-being is outside God's concern and attention; God knows everything that happens to His created beings. Bible-believing Christians differ in their views about capital

punishment; however, this passage teaches the sanity of human life and helps provide a biblical basis for society's role in enforcing God's justice against those who commit murder.

In Psalm 139, David is praising God for His everlasting presence and power. In verse 16, he praises God for seeing the uniformed substance of his body and forming it into a person. The human body's complex unity is a wonder to behold and should evoke our praise to God. God knows who we are and what He desires for us even before we are born, therefore we need to show we value human life in every respect and at every stage.

In Proverbs 1:17 we read, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction." (KJV). "The fear of the Lord." This phrase is used fourteen times in Proverbs. It tells us the first step in morality

is our relationship to God. If we want to bring better morality to our society, we need to do our part in winning the lost to Christ.

The words in Proverbs 1:10-11 admonishes us that when we are enticed to take part in wrong doing and hurt the innocent, have no part in it. Verses 13 and 14 tell us that greed motivates the devaluing of human life, even though it isn't listed in our focal passage.

Verses 15 and 16 says, "My son, do not walk in the way with them; keep your feet from their path; for their feet run to evil and they make haste to shed blood." We must choose friends and associates wisely. Peer pressure in certain situations can lead to participation in violence and crimes against others that one never intended or imagined. May we, as God's people, set godly examples with our actions and lifestyles so oncoming generations will be less likely to travel the road of devaluing human life.

Verse 18 says, "But they lie in wait for their own blood; they ambush their own lives." (NASB). Those who devalue

human life are unwittingly destroying themselves. In Proverbs 24: 10-12, we read that God expects His people to act to protect innocent victims whose lives are threatened. Verse 10 says, "If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small." (KJV) in difficult times, God's people should not be reduced to inaction. When evil seems dominant in a culture, that is the time for believers to summon the courage of their faith and take godly action.

How can we stand idly by while innocent people are hurting? We must act courageously to find ways to help the vulnerable. God rewards those who work to value and protect human life. As Christians, let us look for Christ-like ways in which we can do this. We can be the spokesman for the innocents who can't speak for themselves. Every human being bears God's image; therefore we are accountable for valuing and protecting human life.

Lofton is a member of Willow Grove Church, Collins.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Value Every Life

Psalms 139:1-24

By Tim Alexander

The Psalms speak to my heart and soul like no other book in the Bible. The Psalms were written by several authors during different time periods and they describe a myriad of emotions inside this book. The Psalms are loved by all. We hear them at funerals, weddings, sermons and Sunday School lessons. The Lord used Hebrew poetry to speak to the hearts of the hurting. Many times I have prayed Psalm 46:1(NIV) "God is our refuge and strength an ever present help in trouble" when I pray at the hospital. The Psalm speaks to the core issue of life. I believe God holds our life in His hands, just as we often hold and adore our precious children or grandchildren. God many times holds us, the ones who

are sick, wounded or weak. The Lord Almighty values life, and so should we. I love visiting with our Merrymakers at our church, the retired ones among us. Every day is a gift from above, our Merrymakers know that and value each day they have been given.

1. Value of Being Known, Psalm 139:1-6

God is omniscient. That means that He is all knowing. He is knowledgeable of everything. He does not need a GSP (Global Satellite Positioning) to find us. He not only knows where we are, he knows our thoughts, and even the words we speak, before they are spoken. The scripture also says He is familiar with all of our ways, all of our strengths, all of our weaknesses, all of our prob-

lems, all of our pains we have experienced in this world. The good news is: He still loves us and He desires to use us for the building up of the kingdom, in spite of ourselves. Look at Hebrews 11 the Hall of fame for Faith. The scriptures do not sugar coat peoples lives. God can use anyone if we are repentant and humbly walk with God.

Verse five mentioned "you have laid your hand upon me." What wonderful words for assurance and security. Remember Jabez's prayer "Oh, that you would bless me and enlarge my territory! Let your hand be with me" 1 Chronicles 4:10(NIV) The hand of God can give us great peace and assurance, whatever the situation may be.

2. Value of Being Accompanied, Psalms 139:7-12

God is inescapable. We can not hide or flee from His presence. God is omnipresence. That means that God is everywhere (all present). Jonah

could not hide from God. The people who laughed at Noah as he built the ark could not hide from God. The all knowing God knows every missionary who serves Him faithfully in foreign lands and here in America. He also knows all of those who faithfully serve him behind the scenes in our local churches. David painted a picture with words as he described "If I go to heaven, You are there. If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there." David knew he nor anyone else could hide from God. David, many times in his life, felt guilty and tried to escape from God's presence.

Even dark shadows can not hide us from God. God is with us, protecting us and constantly loving us even when we feel unlovable.

To some people God's presence may be unwanted or unwelcomed, but to the believer we yearn to have a closer walk with the blessed Holy Spirit of God.

3. Value of Having Purpose, Psalm 139:13-16

Our Creator knows His Creation. Jesus said "I am the resurrection and the life." The

Life Giver knitted us together in our mother's womb. The very fabric and tapestry and fiber of our being was woven together. God saw the poet as an embryo growing in his mother before any person visible saw evidence outwardly. The poet wrote that the Almighty recorded his development day by day. The Lord had a plan for David's life. God has a perfect plan for our lives. David knew he was valuable to God. Our job is to show others they have immeasurable value.

In our disposable society people do not value people as the Lord does. Everyone has something to contribute to the kingdom. Some people have devalued the unborn or the aged. May we not forget that God values life: life of the unborn, life of the infant, the life of a child, the life of a teenager, the life of a young adult, median adult and the splendor of our senior adults. Everyone is important! May our words and actions show that!

Alexander is Minister of Education, Harrisburg Church, Tupelo.

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The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

News submitted for publication in The Baptist Record must be either (a) typewritten, (b) neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper, or (c) neatly printed on standardized forms provided by the newspaper. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone.

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Photograph attachments are permissible. Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

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All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to crop-

ping. Photographs must depict people. No landscape-, building-, or object-only photographs will be printed. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date.

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Senate proposal could muzzle religious, morals groups

WASHINGTON (BP) — Senate Democrats and a few Republicans have slipped into a lobbying reform bill a section that would drastically impact the mission and function of churches and nonprofit organizations — such as Focus on the Family and the Family Research Council — that seek to inform voters on moral issues.

One of the provisions of S. 1 now being considered by the Senate would require churches and other nonprofits, classified as "grassroots lobbying firms," to report to the House and Senate any time they spend money to communicate to their constituents on public-policy issues that are before Congress. Failure to comply could result in thousands of dollars in fines and even criminal penalties.

"In short, many members of Congress are tired of hearing the concerns of those who hold traditional family values, and they want to keep them in the dark on what types of legislation they are passing behind closed doors," said Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission in Nashville. "It is an attempt to muzzle grassroots organizations from communicating regularly to their constituents about harmful and helpful legislation."

"This is one of the most significant violations of free exercise of religion and the freedom of political speech in our nation's history," Jay Sekulow, chief counsel for the American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ), wrote in a column posted on the ACLJ website. "Some have said that this plan is the most comprehensive regulation of political

speech that has ever been put forward by Congress."

Tony Perkins, president of the Family Research Council wrote in an e-mail to supporters, "This should be called the 'Silence the Citizens Act of 2007.' ...Even pastors who would encourage the members of their congregation to call their senators, their congressmen, about marriage, about life issues, could theoretically fall under the provisions of this measure."

While pro-family groups say much of the bill is good, they are encouraging constituents to contact their senators and ask them to strike Section 220 — the section that could impact churches and church-related groups — from S. 1. Focus on the Family has created a petition on the matter available at focuspetitions.com.

"Protect your right to know," Focus on the Family's James Dobson said on his radio broadcast Jan. 10. "Protect our right to tell you what we know."

Dobson said the objective of the legislation's supporters is clearly to silence the grassroots groups that led millions of Americans to contact their elected officials and affect the outcome of votes on Supreme Court justices, the partial birth abortion ban, broadcast decency fines and the Unborn Victims of Violence Act.

Among the actions that would be subject to government tabulation under the proposed legislation are phone calls, personal visits,



Perkins

e-mails, magazines, broadcasts, appearances, travel, fundraising, and other activities, Dobson said.

"Any time that we send out a CitizenLink e-mail, or we write an article for Citizen magazine or Dr. Dobson goes on his broadcast and talks about legislation — like he did today — we would have to record and report to the government four times a year," Amanda Banks, federal policy analyst for Focus on the Family Action, said on the broadcast. "If we did not meet those guidelines, we would be subject to fines of \$100,000."

Carrie Gordon Earll, senior director of issue analysis for Focus on the Family Action, said the proposed legislation would not affect labor unions, corporations, 527 groups, or those in Hollywood who express liberal views.

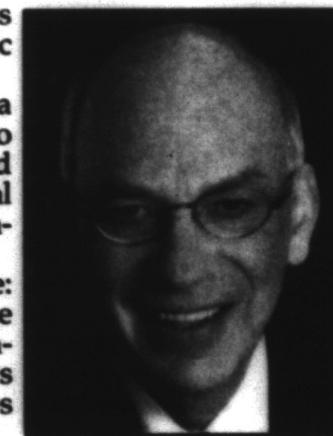
Sekulow, in a post on the ACLJ website Jan. 15, said lobbying reform can be put forward "without impacting the ability of pastors and churches to speak out on the moral issues of the day, which is part of their prophetic responsibilities."

The ACLJ has launched a nationwide campaign to oppose the legislation, and they're preparing to take legal action challenging the measure should it become law.

"Our grievance is simple: Congress cannot silence churches and other organizations from grassroots involvement in critical issues of our day," Sekulow said.

Perkins said any new legislation shouldn't forfeit the First Amendment rights of citizens to petition their government on issues of importance.

"We don't oppose legitimate proposals to address unethical actions by members of Congress, congressional staff and lobbyists," Perkins wrote, "but nothing in those misdeeds provides any justification ... for the idea that Congress should regulate the constitutionally protected efforts of groups such as ours to alert citizens regarding legislative developments in Congress. The First Amendment pro-



Sekulow

tects our right to 'petition the government.' This is the heart of our democracy."

Sen. Robert Bennett, R-Utah, has introduced an amendment to S. 1 that would remove the section of the lobbying bill that upsets conservatives. The amendment is also sponsored by Sen. Mitch McConnell, R-Ky.

"The senator (Bennett) realizes that just as it would be unconstitutional to monitor the press because of their contact with their readers, Congress has no business monitoring the motives of citizens who contact Washington to express their views," Perkins wrote. "I ask you to contact your U.S. senators now and let them know that you oppose the grassroots provisions in S. 1, the Legislative Transparency and Accountability Act of 2007, and that you support Sen. Bennett's amendment."

Concerned Women for America (CWA), another conservative organization, said it supports efforts by Congress to reform lobbying practices in light of recent scandals, but it also supports Bennett's Amendment 20, which would protect grassroots organizations.

"CWA applauds Senators Bennett and McConnell for respecting the rights of the American people while working to reform lobbying practices," CWA said in a Jan. 12 news release.

"If you share my concern about the heavy restrictions that would overshadow grassroots lobbying, please contact your senators and tell them to vote for the Bennett Amendment to strike Section 220 from S. 1," Land said.

"I am so concerned about the serious dangers posed by Section 220, that if the Senate fails to strike it from S. 1, the bill is unacceptable in my opinion. I hope you will join me in asking your senators to make sure the Bennett Amendment passes or else do everything in their power to prevent passage of S. 1, including filibustering the bill," Land said.

The Capitol switchboard number is (202) 224-3121.



McConnell



Land

Group to lobby new Congress on 'faith agenda'

WASHINGTON (BP) — A group of Christian, Jewish, Muslim, and Sikh leaders has promised to hold the 110th Congress to a new "faith agenda" that shifts emphasis away from opposing abortion and homosexual marriage — issues close to the heart of conservative Christian "values voters" — to issues traditionally associated with more liberal, mainline denominations and interfaith groups.

The lobbying group Faith in Public Life said Congress should heed the power of religious voters who "rejected a go-it-alone strategy in Iraq and politicians that put power ahead of policies that promote the common good."

"As a result, Democrats made gains among faith voters — reaffirming God does not belong to either party and religious voters span party lines," the statement from the organization said.

Party politics nevertheless may be in play. Newly elected Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi urged Democratic lawmakers as early as January 2005 to use more religious language and develop a "faith agenda" for their party, a newspaper on Capitol Hill reported.

"House Democrats are people of deep faith and share the values of faith communities," Pelosi told the publication Roll Call in January 2005. A Catholic from San Francisco, Pelosi assembled a "working group" of 15 to 25 House members to assist Democrats in casting the party's vision in a way that would reach the "faith-minded," according to the paper.

That group is now chaired by Rep. James Clyburn, D-S.C., and is working to build relationships with faith communities.

Meanwhile, presumptive presidential candidate Sen. Hillary Clinton, D-N.Y., also has taken steps to make inroads into the faith community, hiring an "evangelical consultant," Burns Strider, to work on her potential bid for the White House, sources on Capitol Hill have reported.

Strider, a Grenada native and son of the late Grenada County Sheriff Jesse Strider, once was a staffer for Pelosi and has worked for Clyburn as the lead staffer for the Democrats' Faith Working Group.



Earll